

YOU CAN HELP DISPEL SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MYTHS

Myth – You get used to noise exposure - the ears get tougher.

Reality: An individual exposed to noise doesn't get used to the exposure. The loss of hearing simply increases the threshold of hearing perception, distorts clarity of communications, and thus reduces the apparent intensity of noise exposure. Hearing loss continues as exposure is sustained. Because little if any pain is felt with hearing loss, many individuals aren't aware of hearing loss until it is too late.



Myth – Safety impedes efficiency or is a “necessary evil” obtained at the cost of optimal efficiency.

Reality: In fact, efficiency and safety generally correlate. Operations that are evaluated for risk also tend to improve safety and reduce waste.



Myth – The employee gets the blame for mishaps.

Reality: This myth must be dispelled in order to get valid feedback from those we are endeavoring to protect. When we can get important, anonymous solutions without alienating the workforce, then we are getting somewhere. Have a system where everyone is able to have valid input without the risk of retribution.



Myth – Excessive attention to safety impedes operational readiness.

Reality: The innate connection between safety and operational readiness facilitates warfighting operations by decreasing the frequency and severity of mishaps and minimizing damage to tactical equipment. We have to manage all risks, both threat and hazard based because dead is dead, injured is injured, and any loss degrades readiness.



Myth – Helmets block your ability to see or hear danger.

Reality: The fact is that helmets provide eye and sun protection and cut down wind noise so you can actually see and hear better. By cutting wind pressure and noise, a helmet reduces fatigue. Wearing a helmet clearly does not increase a motorcyclist's risk of having an accident, and wearing one correlates to reduced likelihood of a fatality.



Myth – Safety in design is too expensive.

Reality: Effective acquisition safety increases productivity through streamlined work processes and avoidance of fatalities, injuries, and illnesses. It saves a significant amount of money by avoiding expensive retrofits due to poor design, disability and retraining costs, and lost productivity.



Myth – Safety is just common sense.

Reality: If safety were just common sense, then we would be born safe. Anyone with a two year old knows that safety is learned: we teach our children to be safe. A serious respect for safety is an ongoing learned behavior, which hopefully is learned before it is too late.



Myth – Safety doesn't require advance planning.

Reality: Disaster can strike quickly, sometimes without warning. Anticipating emergencies and planning a safe response can significantly reduce injuries and limit damage to equipment and property.



Myth – We did safety before. We don't need to do it again.

Reality: Things change, requiring review. Process improvement must be continuous and must include safety.



Myth – We need to first solve the main technical problems and then we can figure out how to provide for safe operations.

Reality: The U.S. Navy has been able to use nuclear reactors without mishap to propel its most modern vessels only because technology and operating practices incorporate safety as an effective aspect of all operations. Economic factors and efficiency demand concurrent integration of safety into design.



Myth – Chemicals won't injure you if you can't smell them.

Reality: A number of chemicals have odor thresholds above their occupational exposure limits, meaning they can harm you before you smell them. Additionally, acute olfactory fatigue (temporary decrease in sensitivity associated with “overloading” of the nasal sensors) often accompanies high exposures. For example, hydrogen sulfide gas in a sewer smells like rotten eggs, but the smell can't be detected within minutes because of olfactory fatigue.



No Myth – Leadership from the top down fully supports safety.

The DON Safety Vision for 2009 based on senior Navy and Marine Corps Fleet input states, “Department of Navy organizations and personnel shall imbed safety culture into the total force (military, civilians, and contractors), with accountability and involvement at all levels...”

